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Stewart Alsop's Interview With Kennedy

Much can be learned, not all of it intended, from Mr. Stewart Alsop's interview with the President in the *Saturday Evening Post* for March 31. It may be read as a reply to those who have called Mr. Kennedy a mere tactician. The article says Mr. Kennedy was irritated when Mr. James Reston of the *New York Times* characterized him as "a tactician, more interested in political manipulation than in public education . . . this leaves him without a goal to which his day-to-day decisions can be related." Mr. Alsop's article is called, as if in rebuttal, "Kennedy's Grand Strategy." It says, at the very start, Mr. Kennedy "does have a goal . . . and a coherent strategy." The article, however, only succeeds in confirming the criticism. It ends lamely with admissions. "The new design is, by its very nature, defensive," Mr. Alsop writes, "it is a holding operation." But what is it holding for? "The President and the men around him," Mr. Alsop writes, "seek no final solutions because there are none." This is hardly the discovery of a Grand Design.

No Mention Disarmament Under Law

There is a second unintended revelation in the article. A researcher, working with official pronouncements, might easily have emerged with materials from which he could assert that the Kennedy Administration did have a global over-all goal. He could produce statements of policy to prove that the Administration conceived of its "holding operation" as a means of obtaining time in which to achieve an end to the arms race under a system of world law. Mr. Kennedy has said as much in major speeches. But no word of disarmament or world law appears in this interview. It would seem that in a private talk with an old friend and sympathetic writer, Mr. Kennedy did not mention them. *It is as if these were ideas expressed in formal speeches framed to fit the needs of certain occasions, as in his appearance before the United Nations, but not deeply felt convictions or concerns.* Perhaps this explains why writers who know the President as well as Mr. Reston does fail to take these set speeches seriously. Mr. Kennedy could have pointed to disarmament under world law as his Grand Design. Instead the interview showed him taken up not only with mere tactics, but almost exclusively with mere military tactics. Between the lines one can see that the old policies of containment and perpetual arms race are still his guide-lines. The only passionate interest which is reflected in this interview—Mr. Alsop calls it an obsession—is with guerrilla warfare. This is not adequate leadership for a world living on the brink.

At the beginning of the interview Mr. Kennedy says many people do not really understand the change brought about in the world situation now that both sides "have these annihilating weapons," i.e. intercontinental missiles armed with thermonuclear warheads. "Of course in some circumstances," Mr. Kennedy is quoted as saying," we must be prepared to use the nuclear weapon at the start, come what may—a clear attack on Western Europe, for example. But what is important is that if you use these weapons you have to control their use. What you need is control, flexibility, a choice. . . ." This is doubly confusing, and seems to reflect confusions on Mr. Kennedy's part. The whole drive for a buildup in conventional arms for NATO has been based on the premise that this would give the Administration if not an alternative to thermonuclear annihilation in Europe then at least a way of enforcing a pause for final reflection before resort to weapons which can only destroy what they are supposed to defend. Here we find the President switching back to using nuclear weapons at the start. Has policy changed again under pressure from those Germans who fear that deterrence will be weakened unless the Russians are put on notice that any attack on Western Germany would immediately bring thermonuclear arms into use?

The other confusion is more fundamental yet, and it emphasizes the danger in Mr. Kennedy's overriding preoccupation with the various forms of military response to Soviet pressure. To say that "if you use these weapons you have to control their use" seems a dangerous illusion. If nuclear weapons are used

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Can't Be Too Careful Where You Drop in Vietnam

Mr. [Wm. E.] MINSHALL (R. Ohio): As you know, Mr. Flood, there is a war going on over there now [in Vietnam]. I was there and I was under armed guard the whole time I was there. It was not just for effect. I went out to the same training camp you went to about 15 miles outside of Saigon and the situation there is very tenuous and it is very strained. The roads are being cut every night. There are roadblocks set up every night and you can hear mortar fire every night.

Mr. [Dan'l J.] FLOOD (D., Pa.): After 4 o'clock we had to be within 20 miles of the city limits of Saigon.

Mr. MINSHALL: And they wouldn't take me out of the city limits in Vientiane [Laos]. That is how they felt about the situation up there. Furthermore I think the committee would be interested in knowing in their drop zone where they practice their parachute drops—it is not far from the training camp about 15 miles outside of town—it is an area about a half mile square, if the parachutists do not hit this drop zone and they fall outside, the Viet Congs pick them up and that is the end of them, so it does make them want to be rather accurate in their training jumps."

—House Approp. Com. Hearings on Defense Dept. Budget for 1963, pps. 248-9, Pt. 2, released March 28.

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Supreme Court Reverses Itself in Tennessee Reapportionment Appeal

A Victory for More Democratic and Progressive Government

The Supreme Court is accustomed to the appeals of minorities seeking justice against discrimination or oppression by a majority. In the Tennessee reapportionment case decided last Monday the roles in the usual judicial tableau were reversed. The oppressed in this case is America's largest majority grouping, its urban residents. The oppressors were America's most powerful minority, its rural voters. In State legislatures and Congress, rural voters exercise a political power completely disproportionate to their numbers. Theoretically legislatures and Congress are supposed to be closest to "the people." Actually one of the most familiar phenomena of American politics is the struggle between Presidents or Governors elected by large majorities only to be blocked by hostile forces in the legislative branches where, thanks to often obsolete and unfair districting a minority of the people may control a majority of the votes. In addition relative handfuls of voters in compact rural machines are the source of the seniority which enables horse-and-buggy area types like Howard Smith of Virginia to hold down such key spots as the chairmanship of the House Rules Committee. If City ever wins its struggle against Country for fair representation, the road blocks to all kinds of liberal legislation will go down.

Department of Justice Joins In

This is why the Supreme Court's 6-to-2 decision in the Tennessee reapportionment case represents a major breakthrough to more democratic government in America. It was a defeat for rural oligarchies and for the big business concerns which are often allied with them. The decision was handed down in a suit joined by the cities of Knoxville, Nashville, Memphis and Chattanooga to bring about the enforcement of the Tennessee Constitution. This calls for reapportionment of legislative districts every ten years but has been ignored by a minority-dominated legislature for 60 years. Since much the same situation exists in most States, briefs amicus were filed on behalf of most of the big cities and many smaller municipalities. The Department of Justice also, for the first time in the history of these cases, appeared as an amicus curiae.

The decision reversed one handed down by Mr. Justice Frankfurter in 1946 for a strangely divided rump court. Jackson took not part; Reed and Burton agreed with Frankfurter. Rutledge concurred in the result but declared his belief that the Court did have power to grant relief in districting cases. Douglas and Murphy joined a dissent in which Black said "no one would deny that the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment would . . . prohibit a law that would expressly give certain citizens a half vote and others a full vote." The minority of three said unfair districting had the same effect. Last Monday's decision was a victory for Black's viewpoint; only Harlan joined Frankfurter in dissent. The case now goes back to Tennessee for trial on the merits.

A victory in principle is assured; the tough problem is how to force the Tennessee legislature to vote a more fair reapportionment. The U.S. courts have never faced a more difficult task. This is only the first in a series of such suits. Wise leadership calls for lightening the burden on the courts by a drive in Congress which has power under Article 1, Section 4, to regulate Congressional districts and under the Fourteenth Amendment to bring about fairer reapportionment in the legislatures. Kennedy in the *New York Times Magazine* four years ago wrote about this problem. Good government requires that he take the leadership on it now, tough as it is.

The Basic Issue

"Regardless of the fact that in the last two decades the United States has become a predominantly urban country where well over two-thirds of the population now lives in cities or suburbs, political representation in the majority of state legislatures is 50 or more years behind the times. . . . The municipality of 1960 is forced to function in a horse and buggy environment where there is little political recognition of the heavy demands of an urban population. . . . The explosion in city and suburban population has created intense local problems in education, transportation and housing. Adequate handling of these problems has not been possible to a large extent, due chiefly to the political weakness of municipalities. . . . In New York City, 8 million people elect only 90 members of the state assembly while 7 million 'upstaters' have 118 representatives. Los Angeles County with a population of 4,151,687 has but one senator while the counties of Inye, Mono and Alpine, California, with a total of 14,014 residents have the same representation. . . . Nor is the lack of urban representation confined only to larger municipalities in the United States. Although Burlington, Vermont, contains 33,000 persons, it has one representative in the state senate, while the little town of Victory with a population of 48 also has one state senator."

—Brief amici on behalf of the National Institute of Municipal Law Officers in Baker v. Carr.

Justice Frankfurter's Usual Appeal to Electoral Action Brings A Stormy Reply

"This [decision] . . . implies a sorry confession of judicial impotence in place of a frank acknowledgement that there is not under our Constitution a judicial remedy for every political mischief, for every undesirable exercise of legislative power. The Framers carefully and with deliberate forethought refused so to enthrone the judiciary. In this situation, as in others of like nature, appeal for relief does not belong here. Appeal must be to an informed, civically militant electorate. In a democratic society like ours, relief must come through an aroused public conscience that sears the conscience of the people's representatives."

—Mr. Justice Frankfurter dissenting in Baker v. Carr.

"Tennessee has an 'informed, civically militant electorate' and 'an aroused popular conscience' but it does not sear 'the conscience of the people's representatives.' This is because the legislative policy has riveted the present seats in the Assembly to their respective constituencies, and by the votes of their incumbents a reapportionment of any kind is prevented. . . . It is well for this Court to practice self-restraint and discipline in constitutional adjudication, but never in its history have those principles received sanction where the national interests of so many have been so clearly infringed for so long a time. National respect for the courts is more enhanced through the forthright enforcement of these rights rather than by rendering them nugatory through the interposition of subterfuges."

—Mr. Justice Clark concurring, same case.

"Time and again, when this Court has been urged to intervene and to overturn legislation of state or nation, we have been informed by some members of the Court that recourse should in most instances be had to the political influence of the citizenry on its legislative bodies and not to a judiciary insulated from the people. . . . It would be a mockery indeed to inform us that the vindication of our most vital interests lies with the legislature and then to permit such an apportionment of legislative districts as to make such vindication impossible."

—Brief amicus by Nassau County, N.Y., residents.

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Physicists Who Warn Against the Arms Race Not Popular in Washington

Bethe Lifts the Curtain on the Science and Weaponry Debate

By Dr. Hans Bethe*

"Anybody who thinks that science can do anything, or fill any order you give it, obviously doesn't understand science. . . . Many Air Force officers, for instance, believe that science can do absolutely anything, that it can provide an offensive power that can break all resistance and a defensive power that can defend against all attack. . . .

"Some of them [the nuclear physicists] say they don't want to have anything to do with atomic weapons. They want to work on pure science and they wish everybody would do the same. . . . At the other end there are people who do exactly what the government or the Air Force or the Atomic Energy Commission tells them to do. They try to invent the deadliest weapons possible without ever thinking of the consequences. . . .

Some For A Total Effort On Arms

We have some [scientists] who fan the flames and say we must do far more than we have done, that we haven't done enough to improve atomic weapons, that we must have more people working on this subject and must spend more money on it, and that the country must be geared totally to that one thing. Some of these men have great influence. . . .

"Scientists can exert some influence on the public by speeches, articles, letters to journals. Interacting with the scientists is the military community—the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Atomic Energy Commission—and the rest of government, including the Congressional committees. . . . It is a complicated process, amorphous and very hard to control. In fact, it is sometimes doubtful whether it is really a democratic process that is going on, especially because the agencies that have the money for scientific research—and now I mean military technological research—are precisely the agencies that want the maximum of military technological development. This includes both the armed forces and Congressional committees. So, scientists who advocate development of weapons without restraint find a very ready public, while those who warn against the dangers of an unlimited arms race find a very hostile reception from many members of the Washington community. . . .

"This does not go for the leaders of government. It was not true of the leaders of the Eisenhower Administration and it is not true of the present Administration. Things are all right generally at the high level, but they are very far from all right at the lower levels, and it is the lower levels generally that influence the public through the press. You hear in the newspapers mostly from those scientists who are strongly in favor of further military technological developments and who, in their endeavor to please, sometimes talk about things that really do not exist and are years in the future, perhaps even impossible, as though they were realities. . . . In my opinion, weapons development should not be unlimited, but in each particular case the government should examine whether the proposed weapon fits into our general military plans, whether it will tend to stabilize the world situation, etc. . . .

"How can a government decide? This is one of the greatest problems of our age. The difficulty is not that the technological answers are hard to understand; they are terribly easy to understand. But they cannot be published by reasons of security. We have an elaborate system of security, and rightly so. There are certain facts about our missile forces and our atomic weapons that we simply cannot state. I can understand completely the confusion of the public when they hear Mr. Teller say we have only begun to develop nuclear weapons and they hear me say we are essentially at the end of that development and anything that comes from now on is not very important. . . .

"In the last four years scientists have been listened to on all problems that have a large technological component. And in the subcommittees of the [President's] Science Advisory Committee an effort is always made to bring in scientists of different opinions. In these subcommittees agreement is usually reached on the scientific problems of development, though the members may disagree on political questions. I think this is a good way to proceed, but it is far from satisfactory for the public because it is all behind closed doors. . . .

"Of course this could be terribly abused if we had a bad President some day who would stack these committees with one-sided scientists, perhaps even incompetent ones. . . .

Q. Do you think that scientists should be allowed to express moral or social or political viewpoints in these advisory sessions with government leaders?

Bethe: "It is unavoidable. . . . Only a few scientists are involved in actually advising the President or the Secretary of Defense. Usually these are scientists in whom the political official has confidence. They are usually the ones who have some general thoughts about the world. However, in these advisory sessions, the scientist is mainly called upon to express his opinions on technical matters, as distinguished from the session we have among ourselves. . . ."

On The Hell of the H-Bomb

"The scientist looked into the hell of the bomb long before anybody else did. One of the things that trouble me is that nobody believes us when we predict the hell, and that even the responses we scientists make to the hell, both inside and outside government, are not appropriate to the magnitude of that hell. The response the government made in 1949 and 1950 to go ahead and develop the [hydrogen] bomb was natural and perhaps even correct. It was said then that we were in a cold war and we had to develop the hydrogen bomb because the Russians would develop it. Well, they sure did, but it was obvious that . . . there would be no security. And I think it is obvious now that weapons are completely out of proportion, that they no longer have any function as a continuation of foreign policy."

—Dr. Hans Bethe, Interview on Science.

***From an interview on science just released by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Box 4068 Santa Barbara, Cal., from which the text is obtainable free.**

What Computers Do to Scientists: "They No Longer Think About The Problem"

"Nowadays people have enormous computing machines costing millions of dollars, and the customary thing is to take a theoretical physics problem and code it for the computer. You put it on the computer and let the computer give you your answer. As a result many scientists think only of how to put the problem on the computer. They no longer think about the problem. By using mechanical devices, people are concentrating much less on a real understanding of the problem and they lose the inspiration and suggestion for further research and sidelines research that come from intimate contact with every phase of the calculations. Only if you have a real understanding can you transmit to your students all the thoughts and the steps that go into the solution. You obviously can't do that if the computer gives the solution. In many cases, if a machine costs, say, several million dollars, people become more concerned with how they are going to keep this machine in operation 24 hours a day." *—Dr. Hans Bethe: Interview on Science.*

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Replacing Balance of Terror With Terror of Imbalance

(Continued from Page One)

from the first, there is no way to control them. If conventional armies are used in an area of crucial importance, as in Western Europe, there is no way to be sure that the conflict will not escalate almost at once; it would be foolish to believe that reasonable negotiation will become easier once the shooting starts. Some measure of control is only possible in peripheral areas like Korea or Vietnam where direct confrontation of the great Powers may be avoided. Even there it is dangerous to play the game of war; explosive emotions might easily have swept us into a broader war under MacArthur's leadership if Mr. Truman had not held firm in Korea. The fact that both sides now possess annihilating weapons really means that war has become too dangerous a game to play. But Mr. Kennedy, like his military adviser General Taylor, wants to find a way to use war again as an instrument of national policy by moving back to pre-atomic kinds of war, which were relatively limited forms of war. Mr. Kennedy really conceives of thermonuclear deterrence not as an umbrella under which to seek a world of law, in which peaceful conflict and colonial aspiration ("wars of liberation") can be mediated peacefully, but as an umbrella under which we can continue to play the game of war.

Strike First Statement Disavowed

This more belligerent stance, as we have said before, is the crucial difference between the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations, and brings us to the controversial point in the Alsop interview. He said, "under the Kennedy grand strategy" two basic Eisenhower doctrines had been "quietly discarded," one that any war bigger than a brush-fire war would be nuclear from the outset, the other that the U.S. would never strike first with the nuclear weapon. Mr. Alsop reported that Mr. Kennedy had two main objectives. One is to maintain "a sufficient margin of superiority in nuclear striking power" so that Mr. Khrushchev will be certain that he dare not strike first without receiving an annihilating counter-blow. The other is to see that Mr. Khrushchev "must *not* be certain that, where its vital interests are threatened, the United States will never strike first." Mr. Alsop quoted Mr. Kennedy as saying "In some circumstances we might have to take the initiative."

This part of the article has evoked a rather lame White House disavowal. To strike first would not only be to ignore the Constitution which in its old-fashioned way still requires a declaration of war by Congress. It would be to play God, deciding that Judgment Day had come and condemning millons on our planet to extinction. The mere suggestion of "strike first" must make negotiation difficult. Imagine how we would feel if Khrushchev were to say that under certain conditions the Russians might strike first. First strike talk is deeply irresponsible and calls for a more explicit repudiation from the President. The Alsop interview, even with this disavowal, is most disquieting. Indeed the Administration's whole conception of building up overwhelming superiority instead of a stabilized nuclear deterrent must create fear of a first strike in the other side, substituting terror of imbalance for balance of terror.

March 28

C. Wright Mills

C. Wright Mills was that rarity, a sociologist who used his specialty as a weapon against war and injustice, not as a system of stale apologetics for the status quo. His sudden death at so young an age is a tragic loss for our country and the world. We are grateful to him above all for championing the cause of Castro's Cuba. In our war against Mexico as later in our war against Spain, there were Americans of prominence (the young Lincoln in the former) to speak up against American imperialism. In our day, in our effort to dominate a small island neighbor, the voices of protest have been all too few. C. Wright Mills was one of those few, and for millions in Latin America he will be remembered as the embodiment of our better conscience and the upholder of our better traditions. We mourn his passing.

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